



# Guidelines for Musicians

**The “full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else; for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit.” *Sacrosanctum Concilium 14***

Sacrosanctum Concilium calls for the ‘full and active participation’ of all the people and says that this ‘is the aim to be considered before all else.’ These are strong words and speak directly to the work of parish musicians. The ‘aim to be considered before all else,’ raises two questions for musicians to think about.

1. What music and texts will bring about the full and active participation of the people in the music of the mass?
2. What can musicians do to engage an assembly fully in song?

Music has a function in the celebration of the Mass. The function of each musical part is identified in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal. ‘*The ritual dimension of sacred music refers to those ways in which it is ‘connected with the liturgical action’ so that it accords with the structure of the liturgy.*’ STTL 68

***Connecting the ritual dimension of sacred music - to the liturgical action.***

## The Mass Setting

The Mass setting is one piece of music. It includes the Gloria, Gospel Acclamation, Holy Holy, Memorial Acclamation, Amen and Lamb of God. It is ideal to use one Mass setting for any one Mass. An assembly needs to be able to sing their Mass setting with confidence. Frequently changing the Mass setting is not ideal. Mass settings are best changed with changing Liturgical seasons in order to give emphasis to the different nature of each Liturgical season.

## The Entrance or Gathering Song

The entrance / gathering or opening hymn has four functions

- Open the celebration
- Foster the unity of those who have been gathered
- Introduce people’s thoughts to the mystery of the liturgical year
- Accompany the procession of priests and ministers.

Since this piece of music must foster the unity of all who are gathered, it is important that all can sing this hymn with confidence and ease.

## The Psalm

We listen to the first reading. We respond to the first reading firstly in silence and secondly by singing the psalm. The psalm is a sung prayer. Ideally, it will be the psalm of the day that is used, but the GIRM does allow the use of Common Psalms. Common Psalms can be repeated over several Sunday’s. They can be found in the back of the Sacramentary. Ideally, the psalm is always sung and it may be sung as a responsorial psalm or as a chant.

“Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy.”  
*Sacrosanctum Concilium 14*

‘The ritual dimension of sacred music refers to those ways in which it is ‘connected with the liturgical action’ so that it accords with the structure of the liturgy.’  
*STTL 68*

### The Entrance Song

When the people are gathered, and as the Priest enters with the Deacon and ministers, the Entrance Chant begins. Its purpose is to open the celebration, foster the unity of those who have been gathered, introduce their thoughts to the mystery of the liturgical time or festivity, and accompany the procession of the Priest and ministers. *GIRM 47*

### Responsorial Psalm

After the First Reading follows the Responsorial Psalm, which is an integral part of the Liturgy of the Word and which has great liturgical and pastoral importance, since it fosters meditation on the Word of God. The Responsorial Psalm should correspond to each reading and should usually be taken from the Lectionary. *GIRM61*



## Song or Hymn at the Preparation of the Gifts

- The purpose of music at the preparation of the gifts is to accompany the procession.
- The music ends when the gifts are placed on the altar or when the priest washes his hands. This means the music may need to continue after the singing has ended. It is important to connect the music with the procession.
- It may reflect words or phrases from any of the readings. This can assist people's reflection on the readings.
- It might offer reflection on the Church season or festivity being celebrated on that day.
- It should not be a major musical piece as this is a low point of the Mass. The Holy Holy has more importance.

## Communion Song or Hymn

At Communion, we eat and drink the Body of Christ - we become the Body of Christ, one holy united people. The Communion song or hymn has the important function of drawing out and helping us grasp this unity that we have in Christ.

The Communion hymn has three main functions

- To express the spiritual union of the communicants by means of the unity of their voices
- To show gladness of heart
- To bring out more clearly the 'communitarian' character of the procession to receive the Eucharist.

It is important to note this emphasis on unity. The song starts while the priest is receiving Communion. The whole assembly joins in song. We sing as we move in procession. This gives assent to our unity. Music ministers go to Communion last. They need to time the hymn to end so they are able to take Communion with dignity and without rushing. On special occasions, there might be a hymn after Communion, say at Christmas, but generally when everyone has had communion, there is a time of silence.

## Song or Hymn at the End of Mass

Mass ends when the people are dismissed - the Dismissal.

The hymn that we sing at the end of Mass, after the Dismissal is not mentioned in the Rite and so is not part of the Liturgy, although it is customary. Since this is the time when people are sent forth to take the love and peace of Christ to the world, to be the Body of Christ in the world, if a song is included, it is appropriate that it be a song of mission. A song that reminds people that 'Brother sister let me serve you' is what we now go to do. The hymn should be short.

### Preparation of the Gifts

The procession bringing the gifts is accompanied by a Chant (cf. no. 37 b), which continues at least until the gifts have been placed on the altar. The norms on the manner of singing are the same as for the Entrance Chant (cf. no. 48).

*GIRM74*

### Communion

While the Priest is receiving the Sacrament, the Communion Chant is begun, its purpose being to express the spiritual union of the communicants by means of the unity of their voices, to show gladness of heart, and to bring out more clearly the 'communitarian' character of the procession to receive the Eucharist. The singing is prolonged for as long as the Sacrament is being administered to the faithful...

Care should be taken that singers, too, can receive Communion with ease.

*GIRM86*



## Silence

Silence is the fertile soil in which the word of God might take root. Musicians need to be careful to create space for silence. The silent spaces as indicated by the General Instruction are;

- After each inviation to pray
- After the first reading (ie before the Psalm)
- After the second reading
- After the homily
- After Communion

## The Nature of the Liturgy and the Timing of Music:

To realise the beauty which is part of the inherent nature of the liturgy, the liturgy must be carried out in such a way that it flows from one element to the next. It is important that musicians understand the need for this flow and that they bring forth the music in a way that allows this to happen. Music is a servant of the liturgy. The purpose of music at any time is to support the liturgy, that is, to support the action, prayer or intention of the liturgy as we move through the Mass.

1. It is important to play music at an appropriate tempo. Music which is too slow or too fast hinders participation.
2. Much of the music requires an introduction of good length so that people may prepare to sing.
3. Acclamations are by their nature shouts of joy or affirmation, short sharp cries. They are more spontaneous and their introductions need to be short (or even removed) so that the liturgy can flow. The Holy Holy, Memorial Acclamation, Amen, and to a lesser extent the Gospel Acclamation, are acclamations.

## Māori Dimension

We acknowledge the NZ Bishops document Kaupapa Māori / Māori Dimension and the guidance it contains for a Māori Dimension to be present in the liturgy. This document asks that the Māori Dimension be included in liturgy. There are four aspects to the Māori Dimension; text, art, waiata and perspective.

In order to respond positively to this request, it is important that we include waiata, hymns in te reo. It is important to encourage our communities to learn some waiata and to maintain them in the parish repertoire. Parishes need encouragement and regular opportunity to sing these waiata.

### Silence

Sacred silence also, as part of the celebration, is to be observed at the designated times. Its nature, however, depends on the moment when it occurs in the different parts of the celebration. For in the Penitential Act and again after the invitation to pray, individuals recollect themselves; whereas after a reading or after the Homily, all meditate briefly on what they have heard; then after Communion, they praise God in their hearts and pray to him.

GIRM 45

Ensure the distinctive identity of the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand with its Māori dimension is present in the liturgy.

*NZCBC's Terms of Reference for NLO 2015 1.2b*



## Choirs and Musical Ensembles

Choirs and musical ensembles are encouraged. They need to take care that their musical leadership is in service of and supports the liturgy, and fosters the participation of the faithful. The primary purpose of a choir or musical ensemble is to make it more possible for the assembly to participate fully in singing the parts of the Mass which properly belong to them. Care needs to be taken that the parish has a repertoire of songs which they are able to sing with confidence and that those who choose music select from this repertoire.

### Repertoire

A parish requires a repertoire. Music needs to be regularly chosen from this repertoire. Sometimes the music director of music ministry team might decide to introduce new music. This new music needs to be supported at all parish masses, played consistently by each musician and played each week for several weeks. Avoid introducing new music as an entrance hymn. Conversely, a music ministry team might decide that some of their music is no longer appropriate and 'retire' some of their songs or hymns.

### Choosing Music

The document, 'Sing to the Lord, Music in Divine Worship,' defines three principles to be used when selecting music. Each principle indicates an aspect of judgement to be exercised by music directors or teams. These three principles are;

- liturgical judgement
- pastoral judgement
- musical judgement.

It is important that the words of hymns underscore the sense of unity that the liturgy seeks.

### Choirs of Various Ethnicities

Parishes might be fortunate enough to have choirs of different ethnicities. This is a good thing and provides opportunity to grow in unity and in understanding of our diversity. While the principles of unity and participation remain important, these choirs need opportunity to sing in their own language, perhaps the hymn at the preparation of the gifts or at Communion. Encouragement and support for the whole assembly to sing in a language other than English is encouraged.

### Visiting Choirs

From time to time, a parish might host a visiting choir. This is a good thing and provides an opportunity grow in unity and in understanding of our diversity. The visitors are really performing a ministry in the parish, much as a visiting priest might. In this sense it is a service to the community. The principles of unity and participation remain important. Music still needs to come from the parish repertoire so that the assembly can participate fully in the Mass. this should be given priority.

#### The Importance of Singing

The Christian faithful who come together as one in expectation of the Lord's coming are instructed by the Apostle Paul to sing together Psalms, hymns, and spiritual canticles (cf. Col3: 16).

Singing is the sign of the heart's joy (cf. Acts 2: 46).

Thus St Augustine says rightly, 'Singing is for one who loves', and there is also an ancient proverb: 'Whoever sings well prays twice over.'

Great importance should therefore be attached to the use of singing in the celebration of the Mass, with due consideration for the culture of peoples and abilities of each liturgical assembly.

Although it is not always necessary (e.g., in weekday Masses) to sing all the texts that are in principle meant to be sung, every care should be taken that singing by the ministers and the people not be absent in celebrations that occur on Sundays and on Holy days of Obligation.

However, in the choosing of the part actually to be sung, preference is to be given to those that are of greater importance and especially to those which are to be sung by the Priest or the Deacon or a reader, with the people replying, or by the Priest and people together.

GIRM 39,40,41



## Teamwork

Successful music ministry in a parish requires teamwork. Music is a servant of the liturgy and musicians in this sense are a servant of the worshipping community. The needs of a faith community over successive weeks means that musicians need to work together to ensure continuity with regard to choice of Mass setting, choice of music and consistent support for the introduction of new music. Ensuring the full participation of people needs to be a shared goal of music ministry teams. Furthermore, musicians are part of the worshipping assembly. Like the rest of the assembly, they must listen attentively to the Word, take part in the prayers and silences of the Mass and respond in the dialogues. All music needs to be prepared in advance of the liturgy.

There should be harmony and diligence among all those involved in the effective preparation of each liturgical celebration in accordance with the Missal and other liturgical books, both as regards the rites and as regards the pastoral and musical aspects. GIRM #111

## Ongoing Formation

Since the liturgy is the source from which people are to derive the true Christian spirit, it holds great importance in the life of the Church. It is important therefore, that musicians participate in ongoing formation and remain open to deepening their understanding of the mystery of the Mass. *Sing to the Lord* notes that poor celebrations may weaken faith. Poor celebrations are therefore to be avoided and musicians need to seek formation in order to develop their understanding of good liturgy, deepen their knowledge of liturgical documents and understand more fully the place of music in making its contribution to good liturgy. Seeking formation annually is appropriate.

Good celebrations can foster and nourish faith. Poor celebrations may weaken it.  
*STTL MIDW #5*

Pastoral musicians should receive appropriate formation that is based on their baptismal call to discipleship; that grounds them in a love for and knowledge of Scripture, Catholic teaching, Liturgy and music; and that equips them with the musical, liturgical and pastoral skills to serve the Church at prayer.  
*STTL MIDW #50*

## Copyright

Copyright requirements need to be observed. The Diocese of Auckland offers the option of a group licence with Onelicense to parishes. To comply with requirements, musicians and parishes need to;

1. Ensure all music is appropriately attributed when words are projected or copied.
2. Report the use of all music (excluding that which is in the Public Domain) to Onelicense. This needs to be done regularly on a weekly or monthly basis.
3. Ensure each musician has a purchased and printed copy of the music. This is appropriate even if a musician plays by ear, since the music being played still has a composer and a publisher who own the music. For each piece of music owned by the parish, one convenience copy may be made.
4. Pay the annual fee.

For more information on copyright, see the guidelines on the Diocesan website.

